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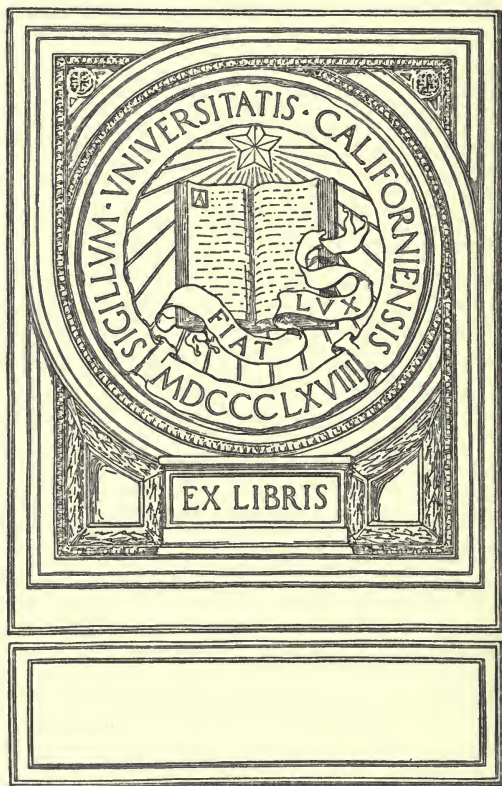
I DINE WITH MY MOTHER

FROM THE FRENCH OF
PIERRE HENRI ADRIEN DECOURCELLE

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VELYN CLARK MORGAN





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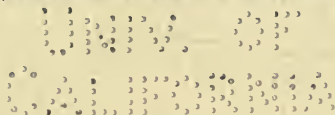


Decourcelle, Adrien
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I DINE WITH MY MOTHER

From the French of

PIERRE-HENRI-ADRIEN DECOURCELLE



By

EVELYN CLARK MORGAN

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The Neale Publishing Company
1904

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By EVELYN CLARK MORGAN

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SOPHIE ARNOULD,of the Paris Opera

COUNT d'HENNIN,her lover

BARON d'ORNAY,one of her admirers

PIERRE DIDIER,an artist

MARION,Sophie's maid

Chef, Coachman, Lackeys.

LOCALE.

Time—January 1, 1765.

Boudoir in the house of Sophie Arnould, rue Richelieu, Paris.

Windows on either side. Door at the right. Fire-place and mantel at the back.

Appointments luxurious. Walls covered with gilt and white *boiserie*.

Garland of Cupids encircles the arched ceiling on which is painted the fable of Psyche.

Gilt consoles in floral design serve for base of mirrors that fill the space between the windows.

Satin curtains bordered with roses hang at the windows and door.

On chairs, sofa, piano, inlaid tables and cabinets are seen a profusion of bouquets. Jewel cases and objects d'art are scattered here and there among the Dresden figures and Sèvres vases that ornament the room.

SCENE I.

Marion (alone, arranging various gifts).
How many flowers and gifts. One messenger scarcely leaves the door before another appears. A rain-shower of diamonds, a cloud-burst of bonbons, a deluge of flowers, and still it rains.

First Footman (entering with bouquet).
Commander Choisy's greeting to Mademoiselle Sophie Arnould.

Marion. Good! (*Footman retires. She lays it with the others.*) More flowers!

Second Footman (carrying small box).
From Baron d'Ornay.

Marion. Thanks. (*Footman disappears. She opens the box.*) Oh! how they shine! What beautiful gems! I wish some one would pelt me with stones like these.

Third Footman (enters, places box on

table). From Viscount St. Croix. (*Retires.*)

Marion. From the Viscount! I thought he was ruined. (*Opens the box; makes a grimace.*) Now, I know he is. Ah! that lucky Mademoiselle.

SCENE II.

Marion; Sophie; Baron.

Sophie (*advancing from left, followed by Baron*). Baron, you are very, very generous; these bracelets are superb.

Baron. Oh, not at all; their worth lies in their uniqueness. I helped the jeweler design them, and then destroyed the pattern.

Sophie. Indeed! How the countesses and baronesses will envy me, and how chagrined they will be. They besiege my tailor whenever they see a new costume on me.

Baron. Then the tailor must be in a continual state of siege, but I honor the taste of the ladies.

Sophie. If only they followed my brilliant ideas, but they follow all blindly. Once I had a chocolate-colored

outré gown that my maid would have scorned. Just for a freak I wore this odd thing; and, my dear Baron, at the next horse-show I saw at least one hundred chocolate-colored costumes. I laugh whenever I think of all those chocolate-colored gowns. Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Sinks herself on sofa and laughs heartily.*)

Marion (*entering*). Dinner is served, Mademoiselle.

Sophie. Baron, I have two covers laid. You will dine with me?

Baron. I should be so pleased, but I dine with my mother to-day.

Sophie. And despise my truffles?

Baron. It grieves me very much to refuse.

Sophie (*gives him her hand*). *Au revoir* then. Shall you be at the Opera to-morrow?

Baron. Do you sing?

Sophie. So they say.

Baron. Then why this unnecessary question?

Sophie. Flatterer! Well, adieu.

Baron. Good-by, Sophie. (*She accompanies him to the door; he sighs deeply.*)

Sophie. What is the matter?

Baron. Oh, nothing, nothing. (*Sighs again and retires.*)

SCENE III.

Sophie, Marion.

Sophie (seats herself on sofa, places a pillow back of her and rests her head against it.) Marion.

Marion. Yes, Mademoiselle.

Sophie. Has Monsieur Didier brought back the miniature which stood on the mantel?

Marion. Ah! That portrait of your mother which Monsieur Didier took to retouch. No, Mademoiselle, he has not been here. You would have heard him if he had, for he enters the salon like a bomb. Artists never think of appearances.

Sophie. Hush, Marion. Monsieur Didier is a friend of my childhood. He covered the walls and fences with caricatures, while I hummed on my way to

school, and now he is a celebrated painter. I look upon him as a brother, and do not forget that I wish you to speak of him with respect.

Marion. Oh, Mademoiselle, I am polite to every one, and to this artist too.

Sophie. That is right, Marion; be courteous to all. But, Marion, you have a very sweet voice; did you ever think of studying for the stage?

Marion. I have thought of it, but did not wish to grieve my parents.

Sophie (aside). Prejudice. (*Aloud.*) True, your father is a cook, and your mother a fish-woman.

Marion. Yes, Mademoiselle.

Sophie. Ah, well; excuse me, my child. (*Aside.*) It is unheard of. (*Aloud.*) Marion, do you think that any one could be happier than I?

Marion. Certainly not, Mademoiselle.

Sophie. Think what it is to be petted

and admired; to possess talent, youth; to be *artiste* as well as a woman; to go from triumph to triumph with glory and applause. I see dukes and counts at my feet, the best blood of the land, to whom my smile is sunshine, my words pearls. And when I tire of flattery, when I long for true, sincere applause, then I go before the public, who have bought the right at the box-office to tell me the truth.

These people are not flattering friends. When they applaud me—what joy, what triumph. They are inspired by me, laugh at my joy, weep at my sorrow. I am much praised and *feted*, Marion.

Marion. Continually.

Sophie. What is the matter with me? Nothing, nothing. (*Walks to the right.*) I possess diamonds fit for a queen; my coffers are filled with gold; my salon with the nobility. The grand dames

also besiege me, they who haven't a single talent. You tell me, Marion, that there is no happier woman in the world than Sophie Arnould. (*Goes to the window.*) How crowded the streets are.

Marion (behind her). They always are on New Year's Day.

Sophie. Yes; New Years' is a charming invention. How happy every one is, how gay—great and small. Marion, tell my servants that I double their wages. (*Goes towards the sofa as she speaks.*)

Marion. Oh! and mine too?

Sophie. Yours too.

Marion. Oh, how delightful! (*Noise, laughter outside.*)

Sophie (jumps up from sofa). What is that?

Count d'Hennin appears coming from the right.

Marion. Count d'Hennin. (*Places a chair for him.*)

SCENE IV.

Count (*approaches, laughing; throws himself in an arm-chair*). Ha! Ha!

Sophie. What is the matter, Count? Explain to me.

Count. Excuse me, my dear, but—
(*Laughs again.*)

Sophie. Will you not tell me the cause of this merriment, and the noise under my windows?

Count. It is my New Year's gift to you, Mademoiselle.

Sophie. What?

Count. Your horses have served you long, so I replaced them by four English ones—spirited, full-blooded beasts.

Sophie. But your laughter? This commotion?

Count. Listen. As your stalls were not sufficient, I set your old horses at

liberty. They looked so surprised, and ran in all directions.

Sophie (laughing). You turned my horses loose?

Count. It was so droll. They seemed to say: "What! Are we turned out of house? Shown the door without saddle or carriage? Haven't we served our lady faithfully?" By Heavens! these beasts touched me. I put them back in the stable. These new English ones must stand a little closer, and now they are all the best friends in the world. And, my dearest Sophie, accept my best wishes, and my horses. (*Kisses her hand.*)

Sophie. It is truly a princely gift.
Two lackeys bring in a laid table, place it before the chimney and retire.

Count. What, dinner here already. (*Looks at the clock.*) My true love, my beauty. I am pleased to find you so

well and happy. I will repeat my wishes, kiss your hand, and withdraw.

Sophie (*keeping him at arm's length*).
You are not going, Count?

Count. What?

Sophie. No, Count.

Count. And why not, pray?

Sophie. Because I am going to keep you to dinner.

Count. Oh, impossible, my dear.

Sophie. Impossible?

Count. Yes, I dine to-day with my mother.

Sophie. But you can write a word of excuse. My servant shall carry the letter.

Count. How quickly you arrange it all.

Sophie. It is so simple.

Count. By no means, I must—

Sophie. Why?

Count. It is New Year's, a *fete* day, a family reunion. I must confess, I sel-

dom visit my mother. If I stayed away to-day she would think I were dead.

Sophie. But if you wrote?

Count. You do not know my mother, she is not one to accept excuses. Picture a stately, pompous lady, seated in an antique black oak chair, emblazoned with the family arms. She has never changed the manners, customs, or dress of the olden times. In her eyes my brother and I are the same lads that used to come home from their tutor on birthdays and New Years'. They were the only days she ever kissed us—a dignified kiss on the forehead, such as she will give us to-day. Then will follow a ceremonious dinner, the silence only broken by my mother, who will toast "the olden times." It isn't gay, but it is a sacred duty, and I have never neglected it. A kiss from my mother is something rare and precious, that I cannot, will not renounce.

Sophie. And if you were ill?

Count. Then my mother would come to me, but I am not. (*Rises.*)

Sophie (*standing and touching his arm retainingly*). Don't go; send a note. Stay with me, please do. The Countess will forgive, and we will be so happy.

Count. But, my dear—

Sophie. Going is just a whim. Stay, Maurice; will you not? You will stay?

Count. It would delight me; but, by Heaven, I cannot!

Sophie. And I was silly enough to think you loved me?

Count. Not love you, because I cannot dine with you? I will to-morrow, the day after, every day.

Sophie. I haven't invited you.

Count. I, not love you! I, who have fought ten duels for you! This morning I quarreled with Monsieur Fontanges because he said your C in Norma

was a Cis. If I had not loved you, would I have challenged him, when the note was somewhat doubtful?

Sophie (walking to the right). Go over to my enemies! Join them, hiss me when I sing!

Count. Know that I fight for every doubtful note. It was a C, and I should like to kill Monsieur Fontanges. Am I not worthy of love? Heavens! It is already three o'clock.

Sophie. Are you going?

Count. Certainly.

Sophie. But I wish you to stay. I insist. Do you hear?

Count (laughingly). "The King says I will." But let us understand each other. I shall go now, but return to supper. It is understood, is it not? (*Tries to take her hand. Sophie pushes him away. He takes his hat and goes as far as the door; stops.*) Will you not say good-by?

Sophie (standing behind arm-chair). Maurice, if you cross that threshold you never enter here again!

Count (approaching her). Are you in earnest? Can't you understand?

Sophie. No excuses. Do you dine with me, or not?

Count (decidedly). No, then, I cannot.

Sophie (walks to right). If you love me stay; if not, go, but do not come again. I am tired of coaxing. I know that some things mean more than gifts. They only mean that a man is a million-aire.

Count. But—

Sophie. You boast of a quarrel. What is that to me? Did you fight with that idea, or to show your *sang froid*?

Count. Sophie!

Sophie. It is a hollow mockery.

Count (standing still). Sophie, there are duties which, though they seem

trifling, are still held sacred. If you cannot understand, so much the worse. I love you truly, and should like to do as you wish; but when my mother's trembling hand beckons me, I obey, even at the cost of happiness. Good-by.

Sophie. Good-by! (*Count at the door*). One last word; I must tell you (*seats herself*) that whatever happens, I shall not eat alone.

Count. Is that your determination?

Sophie. I am decided.

Count. With whom will you dine?

Sophie. With the first comer.

Count. Then I am satisfied. (*Starts again.*)

Sophie. Probably with Baron Marcilly.

Count (surprised). With Marcilly!

Sophie. Yes, with Baron Marcilly.

Count (with an effort). As you like.

SCENE V.

Sophie (alone, rising). It is abominable. They are all alike; they fall at our feet, and swear eternal love, and pay no attention to our wishes. (*Standing erect and walking about.*) It annoys me that he went in spite of all I said. What is he, anyhow? A cold, selfish man; an insignificant mind—in short, an everyday sort of person, whose love is only vanity. His vanity shall suffer. Marcilly lives for me alone. He has no family. I will ask him to dine. (*Rings and begins to write.*) Marcilly is handsome. He has but his cloak and sword, is rich in sentiment alone; and the Count will be so angry. (*Servant appears.*) Quick, this note to its address. (*Servant retires.*) Now I feel happier. (*Sits down.*) I was stifling with indignation. Since I have written this note, I breathe freer. Persons are so willing to fight for me—perhaps the duel only exists in his mind.

I should like to arrange the affair. Fontanges should give him a stroke that would tell. (*Noise in the street.*) What is that noise again? (*Goes to the window.*) Nothing, only the passing crowd finds something gay in the New Year. (*Advances to the front.*) How delighted Marcilly will be; he will not excuse himself. (*Servant enters hastily.*) A letter! Give it to me quick. (*Servant retires. She reads.*) "Your letter fills me with joy, but unfortunately I dine with —" (*Does not read farther, but tears the letter and crushes it in her hand.*) This Marcilly is a dunce. Alas! then I must dine sadly alone, on New Year's Day, and I have lost all appetite. Monsieur Didier does not come either. (*Goes to the fireplace.*) I counted him as my best friend. So, I must strike him, too, from the list. Ah, friendship, like love, is only a breath. I am getting positively hungry, yet alone I will not eat.

SCENE VI.

Sophie and Marion.

Sophie (*seats herself at table*). Ah! are you here, Marion?

Marion. Yes, Mademoiselle. I—

Sophie. How fine you look.

Marion. . Yes, Mademoiselle, I put on my new dress, as I—

Sophie. Marion, you are a good girl. I am pleased with you, and I am going to bestow a great favor on you. Sit down here, Marion. You shall eat with me.

Marion. But, Mademoi—

Sophie. Well! What is it?

Marion. Have you forgotten?

Sophie. What?

Marion. That it is my holiday, when Mademoiselle allows me to remain out till 9 o'clock.

Sophie. Oh! You have a home, too. Well, you can take another day for home.

Marion. Oh, Mademoi—

Sophie. What! When I do you the honor to invite you to my table?

Marion. The honor is indeed great, but will you not postpone it till to-morrow?

Sophie (angrily). What do you say?

Marion. I do not know why Mademoiselle should be angry. I certainly do not mean to offend.

Sophie. Well, I accept your apology. Now, sit down at the table.

Marion. Oh, Mademoiselle, I am so sorry, but at home they will wait for me. On New Year's Day we always dine together, and I should expect to be unlucky the whole year if I did not go.

Sophie. What if I will not permit you to go?

Marion. Then, sorry as I should be—

Sophie. What?

Marion. Then—

Sophie. Speak!

Marion. Then I should ask to be discharged.

Sophie (rising). Very well, then. Go!

Marion. Mademoiselle!

Sophie. Straight out of my house. A maid I took for pity, and now—What! you do not go?

Marion (pleadingly). Believe me, Mademoi—

Sophie. Must I call my servants? (*Rings.*) Heavens! how my head aches; it is these abominable flowers. Can no other place be found for them? They fill the salon, cover the floor.

Marion. Oh yes, certainly.

Sophie (rings all the bells). Have I no

servants to do my bidding? (*Walks to the right.*)

Several servants appear with disturbed countenances.

Servants. Did Madame ring?

Sophie. Yes, be quick. Throw these flowers out of the window. (*They hastily obey.*) Leave the windows open, that the air may cool me.

Marion. Then, Mademoiselle, must I—

Sophie. You must leave at once. (*Strides to the left.*) Oh, how I am served. My lackeys sleep all day. (*To coachman.*) You use my horses as your own.

Coachman. I—Madame!

Sophie. Yes, you. I say to every one of you, go! (*To the chef.*) And you, what have you prepared for my dinner?

Chef. Truffles, as you ordered, Madame.

Sophie. Truffles, and nothing but truffles; for six weeks I have seen nothing but truffles.

Chef. And all first marketings of the season.

Sophie. The first of the season. Why not diamonds and pearls? They would not sooner bring me to poverty. Go! I say to each of you, go! I do not wish to see your faces again. (*Servants go out. Sophie throws herself on the sofa.*) O Heavens! how unhappy I am.

SCENE VII.

Sophie, Didier, Marion.

Didier (coming from the right, announces himself). Monsieur Didier, artist. Good-day, Sophie; here is the miniature again. The hand of friendship has restored it. (*Places it on the mantel.*) What a good, true face it is; how the peasant dress suits it. Your mother must have been a whole-hearted, brave woman. (*Takes an orange from the table.*) But we are forgetting the season's greetings. Mademoiselle, I wish you luck and happiness in the New Year, as the latest phrase goes. And here is my *carte de visite*. (*Takes her hand and kisses it.*) Why so silent? Ah, good Heavens! you weep.

Sophie. I? No.

Didier. But tell me, what is the matter?

Sophie. Nothing; nothing.

Didier. "Nothing; nothing." But there is something. Tell me; speak. (*Seats himself on a sofa beside her.*)

Sophie. But, I assure you—

Didier. Ah, Sophie, you would deceive me. Have you forgotten an old house in the suburbs, and two gloomy attic rooms? In one, a young girl sang her scales to the accompaniment of a discordant piano; in the other a young fellow daubed his canvas—his chief furniture an easel. The neighbors were friends, good warm friends, nothing more. There was not fire in the stove every day. There was not always breakfast. There were no presents, but plenty of advice. The singer says to the artist, "I think those clouds hang too low"; and the painter says to the singer, "I think that C was too high." Then they quarrel, but

finally the painter makes his clouds higher, and the singer takes her C lower, and peace is restored. These children dreamt of glory, of the world's applause. The young girl was you, Sophie; the painter, I. The old house still stands, and our friendship endures.

Sophie. My friend!

Didier. Share your sorrow with your friend and it will grow less. Will you not?

Sophie. Do you really wish to hear? Then I will. To-day I have received gifts fit for a queen.

Didier. Well!

Sophie. Hosts of people have sent good wishes.

Didier. So far I see no cause for unhappiness.

Sophie. But no one will dine with me, Pierre; no one, not even the man who professes to love me; not even my maid. They all dine with their families.

I have no family. I thought I had slaves and admirers. I did not know how alone in life I stood. I am very silly. (*Brushes away a tear.*)

Didier. No. There are little needle pricks which are very painful. You did not expect it, and therefore the blow has hurt you. My dear Sophie, I know you have more heart and feeling than are usual with women of the world.

Sophie. My good Pierre, I have not the courage to ask you. (*Points to the table.*)

Didier. I would with all my heart, but—

Sophie. I can guess.

Didier. I dine with—

Sophie (*laughing bitterly, and rising*). I know, I know, and will not keep you longer. *Au revoir*, my friend.

Didier. It is true. I cannot stay, and yet it grieves me to leave you alone.

Ah, an idea! Be happy. (*Rises and goes to her.*)

Sophie. What do you mean?

Didier. You will dine badly, certainly; but not alone.

Sophie. What! You wish—

Didier. Do you object? Does our simplicity frighten you?

Sophie. Frighten me? Oh, come.

Didier. But not in that costume.

Sophie. You do not admire it?

Didier. Too much; it is far too elegant. Borrow a gown from your maid—a simple woollen gown. That is the usual thing with us. I will introduce you as Mademoiselle Sophie, whose needle serves me for 20 sous a day, and you will be received with open arms.

Sophie. You are right. Marion! (*Rings, opens door, and calls again.*)

Didier. She does not come.

Sophie. Good Heavens! I forgot. I dismissed her.

Didier. The good Marion. Why?

Sophie (pointing to table). Because she would not—

Didier (laughing). Oh! I understand.

SCENE VIII.

(Enter Marion, eyes red with weeping,
satchel in hand.)

Marion. Mademoiselle, I come to
take leave.

Didier. Mademoiselle takes you
back, Marion.

Marion (dropping satchel). Oh! is it
true, Mademoiselle?

Sophie. Yes, Marion. Will you stay
with me?

Marion. Oh! how can I thank you?

Sophie. By loaning me a dress.

Marion. I loan you a dress? I, to
you?

Sophie. You, to me.

Marion. The best that—

Sophie. The simplest.

Marion (opening her satchel). Will this
do?

Sophie. Yes. Won't it, Pierre?

Didier. It is rather dressy, but it will do.

Sophie. Dress me, Marion. Pierre!

Didier. Sophie!

Sophie. Did you hear?

Didier (*without disturbing himself*).
Certainly.

Sophie. Wait for me a few moments, and look at a book.

Didier. Very well. (*Takes a book and seats himself on sofa.*) So!

Sophie. And turn your back.

Didier. So! (*Turns around.*)

Sophie. And don't look in the mirror.

Didier. Oh! an artist doesn't count.

Sophie. They are the most observing.

Didier (*pensively, while Marion assists Sophie*). Isn't friendship a beautiful thing, Sophie?

Sophie. I certainly agree with you.

Didier. For example, here is one of the most beautiful women of Paris—

for you are one of the most beautiful women of Paris. (*Turns half toward her.*)

Sophie. Now! Now!

Didier (*assuming former position*). Well, then, a charming young woman makes her toilette in the presence of a handsome young man; for between ourselves, I am a handsome young man.

Sophie. Will you stop looking in the mirror?

Didier. Right! Well, then, here are two young and handsome people; one in trouble, and the other full of sadness, because love is not in the game. Oh friendship, friendship, thou art true, when love deserts us!

Sophie. Now I am ready.

Didier. May I look, then?

Sophie. You may. Marion, you have the evening free. Tell all the servants I take them back.

Marion. And, Mademoiselle, do you double our wages?

Sophie. I triple them.

Marion. Oh, how lovely! What luck. (*Retires.*)

Didier. How charming you look.

Sophie. Like a maid?

Didier. You remind me of our attic.

Sophie. We walk, I suppose. A change will be agreeable.

Didier. It won't be a change for me.

Sophie. If my carriage were seen they would know at once it was Sophie Arnould.

Didier. That reminds me that I have something to tell you.

Sophie. Speak.

Didier (earnestly). Dearest Sophie, my father is a poor, honest-hearted mason; my mother a simple, good woman, who thinks me morally and physically a masterpiece of creation. If you love me, do not disillusion her.

They will probably set a cabbage soup before you, made in my honor. I don't like it, but always take a double portion to please them. You must not show any fastidiousness if you do not wish to offend my parents. You will notice many peculiarities in their speech, but I am sure you will show your usual kindness and charity. Strangers might laugh at them, but you will not, for it would grieve me. I warn you, you will not eat from rare china, and you will find a wretched looking dog there; he is a pet of the household. Now come. (*Takes her arm.*)

Sophie (*stopping at the door*). Pierre?

Didier. Have you forgotten something?

Sophie. No. But are you really willing to take me with you?

Didier (*astonished*). Why, certainly!

Sophie (*extending hand*). I thank you,

my friend. That is all I wish. (*Comes forward.*)

Didier. What? Has my description frightened you?

Sophie. Do not think that. Were I truly the Mademoiselle Sophie you wish to present, I should not hesitate a moment; but I am Sophie Arnould, and my place is as little in your mother's house as in that of the Countess d'Hennin—

Didier. Why, what does this mean?

Sophie. Hear me, my friend. Your parents might see me some day in my carriage and learn who I am, and it might not be pleasing to them. So good-by, and thank you. You have shown me that I am not so forlorn as I fancied, and that has done my heart good. Good-by, my friend and brother.

Didier. You abide by that decision?

Sophie. I really must. It is better so.

Didier. You act like a noble, whole-souled woman. I only thought to make you happy. You think of my duty. (*Takes both her hands.*) I came laughing and found you weeping, and now I am in tears. Farewell, my good Sophie. *Au revoir.*

SCENE IX.

Sophie. The brave fellow. And the good Count, I misjudged him; but he will come back and forgive me. (*Stands coquettishly before the mirror.*) He is so good, so awfully good. (*Takes her mother's miniature in her hand, and contemplates it thoughtfully.*) Ah, they are all right, to place home and family above every thing. Oh, my mother! (*Kisses miniature and while speaking crosses the room, places the portrait on the table, and seats herself.*)

SCENE X.

Sophie alone (enter Marion in breathless haste.)

Marion. Mademoiselle, dear Mademoiselle.

Sophie. What is it, Marion?

Marion. I have told my mother, and she says I may stay and dine with you.

Sophie. I thank you, my child; but I will *not* spoil your family party.

Marion. But really, Mademoiselle, I do not wish to leave you alone.

Sophie (gaily). I am not alone, Marion. See (*pointing to picture*), I also dine with my mother.



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